

ARMILLA: CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

1. Until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the prime purpose of the ARMILLA patrol was to provide reassurance and, if necessary, protection to British shipping in the Gulf. The ARMILLA patrol has also had the secondary but nonetheless important role of demonstrating our commitment to and support of our friends in the Gulf. The invasion of Kuwait gives this task continuing and added significance. In addition, the ARMILLA patrol is now required to contribute to the multinational effort to monitor the effectiveness of the sanctions imposed under SCR 661 and, if necessary, enforce these sanctions, as requested by the legitimate government of Kuwait.

Aim

2. This paper proposes a revised concept of operations to cover four tasks:

- (1) Reassurance and protection of British shipping in the Gulf;
- (2) Participation in the monitoring of sanctions imposed under UN SCR 661;
- (3) Action, if necessary, to assist in the enforcement of UN sanctions;
- (4) Demonstration of our continued commitment to our friends in the Gulf.

Protection and reassurance of British Shipping

3. This task will require:

- a. maintaining a presence in possible threat areas to

provide reassurance to entitled ships

b. occasional boarding of entitled ships to proffer advice on damage control and to pass any relevant current threat information

c. accompanying or escorting entitled merchant ships through possible threat areas to their destinations.

4. The present level of Iraqi threat in relation to the substantial naval and air forces already deployed to the Gulf does not appear sufficient to warrant the reintroduction of naval accompaniment of merchant shipping; but we must be able to do so quickly if it should become necessary.

5. At present British merchant shipping in the Gulf is adhering to FCO advice not to venture north of 26° 20 N but it is likely that strong commercial and political pressures will emerge rapidly for shipping to proceed further north to the Saudi ports of Al Jabiul and Ras Taura and also to the Iranian terminal at Kharg. For this reason, we believe that the ARMILLA operating area should be extended to 27° 30N to provide reassurance to British shipping proceeding to Saudi ports.

MONITORING AND ENFORCING SANCTIONS

6. The key ingredients for enforcing the UN sanctions at sea are:

(1) Good intelligence on all merchant shipping movements to identify potential blockade runners;

(2) Complete surveillance of the Strait of Hormuz (and, if necessary, choke points for other outlets);

(3) Interception and diversion of suspect vessels.

7. This paper sets out the contribution which UK forces are already making in each area to the multi-national effort to enforce sanctions and how we believe that this can be further developed and, in particular, coordinated with the US (and possibly French and other nations deploying maritime forces to the Gulf region).

Intelligence

8. An analysis of the requirements and an outline possible system for gathering intelligence on merchant ships has been carried out by the Naval Staff. The RN is already collating intelligence from a number of readily available sources on a national basis and some discussion has already taken place with the USN about how this can be further developed on a multi-national basis. The subject will also form part of discussions with the French on 14 August.

9. The intelligence picture already available provides a good basis for identifying potential blockade runners but this would undoubtedly be improved by access to information from other national (particularly US) sources. At the same time, it is important that UK information should be passed (in suitable form) to warships of other nations which are cooperating in implementing sanctions. In addition, the more comprehensive (and multi-national) the evidence against a particular ship, the easier it will be to justify any enforcement action that may be taken. For all these reasons, we believe that it is essential to establish an international focal point for the collation and dissemination of information on merchant ship movements.

10. A number of possible candidate organisations worldwide for this role have been identified. We believe, however, that the UK is well fitted to assume this role because of the wide variety of national information sources available and the existing close links between the RN and merchant shipping

organisations. In addition, if the UK were to assume this role, it would help to prevent the impression developing that maritime operations were being dominated by the US. We believe that the US themselves would welcome an offer to undertake this role.

Surveillance

11. The immediate and most important requirement is to prevent sanctions breaking in the Gulf itself although there may yet be a requirement for some naval enforcement action in the Red Sea, perhaps in relation to Aqaba (if required this might best be conducted by the French and/or USN). The RN, USN and French navies already have sufficient warships (and aircraft) in the area to provide complete surveillance of merchant shipping transiting the Strait of Hormuz. Detailed discussions on coordination have already taken place with the USN and discussions with the French are to take place on August 14.

12. It is envisaged that 2 of the 3 DD/FF deployed to the Gulf will normally be at sea and available for patrolling and surveillance tasks, supplemented by the 3 Nimrod MPA deployed to Seeb. It is proposed that the ARMILLA ships and the Nimrod aircraft should carry out surveillance extending to the Iranian Advisory Zone (outside territorial waters). The RN already carries out occasional transits of the IAZ but before expanding this role it is intended to inform the Iranians privately of our plans and secure their tacit acceptance. Subject to the agreement of the Gulf States concerned, it is also proposed that RN operations should extend to territorial waters on the western side of the Gulf.

13. It is apparent that the USN has more than sufficient forces available to provide a surveillance/interdiction line at the Strait of Hormuz itself (we understand that they intend to intercept vessels outside the Strait). For this reason it seems that the most useful contribution that the RN could make is to provide preliminary surveillance inside the Gulf and feed

intelligence to the US ships at the Strait (in essence a scouting role). Equally, the ARMILLA ships would be able to continue to monitor the movements of inward bound ships once they had passed the US ships at Hormuz, as well as internal movements in the southern Gulf. We are also considering further the possibility of monitoring coastal traffic by small vessels within the Gulf, although the amount of sanctions breaking by this means is unlikely to be significant. This would also permit ARMILLA to continue its role in support of British shipping within the present force level. From our discussions with the US we know that they would very much welcome the RN in this role, both because it is a sensible division of labour and to demonstrate that naval operations inside the Gulf are not a purely US preserve (and the the US are doubtful whether navies other than the RN will be willing to operate inside the Strait of Hormuz). They would also particularly value our extension of surveillance to the IAZ, as USN activity there is likely to be strictly limited.

Enforcement - US intentions

14. The US are describing their operation as 'interdiction' to avoid the specific legal connotations of a blockade. for this reason they do not intend to seize contraband vessels but to prevent ships inbound to Iraq from entering the Gulf and to prevent outbound ships from leaving. This is effectively a 'quarantine' operation.

15. The general guidelines to which the US are operating are that all commodities inbound to Iraq or Kuwait (other than medical items) should be interdicted. If a vessel refuses to turn away or submit to necessary inspections, measures short of force will be used initially but, if necessary, proportionate force will be used.

Interdiction by RN

16. This US approach is broadly similar lines to that outlined in the MOD paper on the enforcement of a maritime blockade and the draft ROE for a blockade approved in principle by OD(G) on 9 August, subject to confirmation of appropriate legal authority on the basis of a request from the legitimate Government of Kuwait. Such a request has now been received by both the US and the UK. Although this provides the legal basis for enforcement action, this would be further strengthened if the agreement of major flag states were obtained for UK warships to stop, board and inspect their vessels, if this is necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the UN sanctions. Although this would be a useful strengthening of the legal and presentational position, a fully effective interdiction operation can be mounted almost immediately on the basis of the ROE agreed in principle by OD(G). The detailed ROE changes required being prepared for submission to MOD Ministers tomorrow.

Reassurance to Gulf States

17. If we are to continue to provide reassurance to our friends in the Gulf it is important that, in addition to ARMILLA's contribution to the enforcement of sanctions, RN ships maintain a visible presence around the Gulf. It is therefore intended that the DD/FF not actually on patrol should be stood down to a port in the Gulf area where, in addition to carrying out maintenance and replenishment, it will provide such a presence.

Cooperation with other navies

18. The proposals outlined have been produced on the basis of close consultation with the USN and Flag Officer Second Flotilla (Rear Admiral Abbott) is en route to the Gulf to develop detailed plans for operational cooperation in theatre. Following an initial contact between CDS and his French counterpart, discussions are due to take place with the French navy tomorrow (14 August). The Dutch Defence Minister telephoned Min(DP) this morning to say that his Government had

decided to despatch 2 frigates to the Gulf and to say that he hoped that it would be possible to develop cooperation between European navies contributing to the multinational force. It was agreed that this could be followed up at the political level at next week's meeting of the WEU but that in the meantime UK and Dutch staffs should talk urgently about the practical cooperation between the two navies.

Summary

19. In addition to its existing tasks of reassurance to British shipping and demonstration of our support for friendly Gulf States, the ARMILLA patrol is now required to contribute to the monitoring and enforcement of UN sanctions. After discussions with the US, it appears that the most effective RN contribution, at least initially, would be to provide two ships to patrol inside the Gulf working in cooperation with the USN vessels stationed outside the Strait of Hormuz. This arrangement could begin to operate within the two days, subject to finalisation of practical details with the USN on the spot. If enforcement action is to be fully effective ROE permitting the use of force, if necessary, will be required. Appropriate ROE will be submitted shortly. To further strengthen the legal basis for enforcement action and for presentational reasons it would be helpful to secure the agreement of major flag states that the RN may, if necessary, stop board and search any of their vessels suspected of sanction breaking.

20. This approach would also allow the ARMILLA patrol to maintain its existing roles in support of British shipping and the Gulf states. The current Iraqi threat is not judged sufficient to warrant the reintroduction of accompaniment of merchant shipping, although once shipping resumes use of the Saudi ports of Al Jubail and Ras Tanura it will be necessary to extend the ARMILLA operating area slightly further north to 27° 30'N. With 3 DD/FF deployed to the area, a sustainable patrol level is 2 DD/FF on operations in the Persian Gulf which 1 DD/FF

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stood down to the Gulf of Oman or a Gulf port a 24 hours notice,
carrying out maintenance or showing a diplomatic presence.

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